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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the career patterns of educational administrators in order to identify socialization processes and consequences in public school systems. Section 1 presents a review of the literature dealing with school career socialization, including studies of the career patterns of both teachers and administrators; section 2 examines research dealing with the mid-career socialization of school administrators; and section 3 presents the author's conclusions regarding administrative careers in public school systems. Three administrative career patterns are identified, including (1) principalship positions that mature bureaucratic characteristics; (2) central office positions that are adjusted to reflect the office holder's professionalism and organizational unanimity, and (3) aspiring superintendents who engage in activities that ensure movement towards the ultimate goal of the superintendency. The author concludes that administrators' perspectives and behaviors are systematically formed by the nature of the vulnerability of the school organization, by the nature of the service functions the schools perform, and by the nature of the career options available in school administration. (Author/JG)

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Mid-Career Socialization of Educational Administrators

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Mid Career Socialization of Educational Administrators

Socialization within a profession occurs as a result of certain experiences and training undergone by the individual. Within education, the tradittional roles into which individuals may be socialized are teaching and administration. Both of these roles contain within them certain career patterns which are a result of further socialization.

This paper deals with the socialization process of administrators during their mid-career stage. Socialization is defined as that process which results in adaptability to norms, values and attitudes of a given situation. Therefore, the primary question is: What factors contribute to an administrator's socialization resulting in certain mid-career positions?

This report examines the career patterns of administrators in order to determine the socialization processes and consequences. It is divided into three sections: the first section presents a review of literature addressing school career socialization; the second section presents the mid-career socialization of school administrators; and the third section draws some conclusions regarding administrative careers in public schools.

Review of the Literature

The socialization of teachers has been reported in two works: Griffiths' (1965) study which reports teacher upward mobility in New York city and Becker's (1951-52) study of horizontal movement among Chicago teachers

Griffiths determined that access into public school professional positions began with the acceptance of a teaching position. Being granted the position, the newcomer would become a part of a process which for those who remained was vital in their assumption of the requisite school role. The process consisted of recruitment, selection, appointment and promotion. Aside from being recruited to the teaching position, there was virtually no recruitment to administrative positions. However, there was always selection and sometimes promotion..

Griffiths identified four kinds of teachers: the "pupil oriented, the subject oriented, the benefits oriented and the GASers (Getting the Attention of Superiors). The pupil oriented were those who chose to remain in the classroom, shunned administrative tasks and were most interested in the children. The subject oriented, called by other teachers intellectuals were stable individuals who moved horizontally until they found a congenial teaching position. The benefits oriented teachers were those who were interested in vacations and the extra moonlighting income they could earn. They were horizontally mobile until they found a "good deal." Some appeared to have once been GASers but had become weary of the chase. The GASers were those who were on appointment with regular teaching licenses and 5-19 years of experience. The jobs they had appeared to some teachers to be irritants, e.g., they were in charge of lunchrooms, admininstered annual field days, chaired teachers' interest committees, coordinated student teachers, and trained the school track team. There was no extra salary, but they "gave the incumbent a place in the sun" (23). These GASers eventually became assistant principals and acting chairmen. Teaching was not their prime interest. As Griffiths stated, "It is clear to the New York City teachers that to climb in the system one must first GAS. The [administrative] examination validates the GASers; it does not create a pool from which promotions are made" (23).

The Griffiths' classification of teachers represents four types of adaptation by which teachers performed their work. He found that in general New York teachers were local individuals. Moreover, the administrative positions were completely filled by insiders. No outsiders had been known to be licensed as a principal or department chairman. When an outsider was appointed as superintendent, the members of the school system experienced trauma. The adaptation was feasible through the informal structure which accompanied the formal structure. Teachers "shopped around" for schools while principals individually selected their own teachers. Promotion, was therefore largely in the hands of principals. The acting positions became preparation and screening mechanisms for further advancement. Of utmost importance, was the role the GASers assumed with the obvious characteristic to take every opportunity to impress their superiors. Griffiths refers to this process as a "procedural rather than a substantive attitude toward work often regarded as decisive in career success" (24).

The analysis presented above emphasizes the upward mobility of teachers. Becker (1951-52) in his study focused on the horizontal movement characteristic of teaching. He found that even though the available teaching positions in schools were similar in formal characteristics, they differed widely in the configurations of the occupation's basic work problems which they presented. Teachers, then, adapted by moving among various schools in search of a satisfactory position in which to work. The satisfaction was derived by the improvement of conditions within three areas: 1) teaching, 2) discipline, and 3) moral acceptability. These problems arose from the teacher's relations with children, parents, principals and other teachers. In general, the greatest problems of work were to be found in lower class schools. Movement, then, tended to be out from the "slums" to the "better" neighborhoods. New

teachers would find themselves assigned to slum schools since transfers to those schools were few. Some adapted to the working conditions and others did not. Consequently, two major types of careers were developed among the teachers.

The first type consisted of those teachers who attempted to move to a "better" school in a "better" neighborhood. Several factors contributed to the success of the move: 1) knowledge about the "good" schools; 2) not being of an ethnic type of having a personal reputation which would cause the principal to informally reject the candidate; and 3) being patient enough to wait for the transfer to the "right" school to take place.

The second type of career was characterized by a permanent adjustment to the "slum" school situation. These careers were the result of the process of adjustment to the particular work situation, to such an extent that the teacher would be tied to a school which would otherwise be considered undesirable. The process would begin when the teacher through circumstances would remain in the undesirable school for a number of years. During this stay, changes took place in the teacher and in the character of her relations with other members of the school's social structure. Eventually, the present situation would become bearable and benefits to be gained from transferring elsewhere did not appear attractive"

An identification of the specific elements which contribute to the adaptability helps to explain the process. First, the teacher would learn new teaching and disciplinary techniques which would enable her to adequately cope with the "slum" children. Further, the teacher would learn to revise her expectations with regard to the amount of material she could teach and would learn to be satisfied with a modest accomplishment. This would enable her to acquire a routine of work which would be customary, congenial, and predictable.

Finally, she would find for herself explanations for the actions of the children; these explanations would permit her to "understand" the behavior of the children as human.

Meanwhile, the teacher was gradually being integrated into the network of social relations that made up the school. Her colleagues accepted her as trustworthy, and gradually she acquired a position of influence and prestige in the informal structure. Discipline problems would ease with the establishment of a reputation for firmness and the maintenance of order would follow. Finally, the problem of authority in relation to parents would lessen as stable and enduring relationships were established with the community's families.

This process instilled within the teacher a fear of moving to a different site. The belief system that freedom in the slum school was better than the constraints imposed by "interfering" parents and "spoiled" children would become entrenched. Besides, the development of new relationships would become a hardship as well. These factors all led to an adjustment which halted further mobility.

Either of these careers resulted, finally, in the teachers achieving a position in which she would be more or less settled, and would be regarded as predictable and satisfactory. Changes might come about, but not without accompanying pain. "Better" schools might become less than satisfactory and the "transfer to a nicer school" process would be renewed. A change in the principal through transfer or retirement might also worsen conditions. Nontheless, adjustment would require further socialization.

Two studies have been reviewed in light of their contribution to the socialization processes among teachers. It has been reported that teachers perform their role in a variety of ways. Their adaptability has certain consequences for them and for the organization. Most significantly, the implications regarding their careers are serious. Those who elect to move

vertically, must depart from teaching and assume administration as a second career. Those who remain in teaching must move horizontally in one of two differing patterns, each one encumbered by its own investments and liabilities.

Studies dealing with the socialization of administrators have focused on two positions: the superintendency and the principalship. The greatest amount of research, has however been conducted with the principalship. There is also one reported study dealing with the central office staff, but it does not specifically deal with socialization, nevertheless, it will be reviewed here because some of the findings are presumed to contribute to our understanding of the socialization processes of administrators during their mid-career stage of their professional lives.

Research dealing with mid-career socialization is noticeably absent. Studies dealing with career patterns focus upon the superintendency position. For example, Carlson (1961; 1962; 1972) differentiated between the place-bound and career-bound superintendents; Halpin (1965) extensively studied leader behavior; Gross, et al. (1958) dealt with consensus of role expectations between boards of education and superintendents; Seeman (1960) investigated superintendents' career characteristics; and Willower (1960) examined the relationship between leadership styles and leaders' perceptions of subordinates. Other studies address mobility; e.g., Mosier & Baker (1952), Castlebury (1964), and Shipman (1965) examine the superintendency at a point in time, consider data relative to tenure and transfer and view mobility as simply a positional change or at best, consider the move in relationship to the size of the administrative unit usually measured by the number of teachers employed. The major study which surveyed career patterns is the 1960, Profile of School Superintendents which reports that in school districts of a population of 100,000 or more the career pattern tended to be: teacher/principal/central office administrator/superintendent. In smaller school districts, the career pattern consisted of teacher/principal/

superintendent.

Recently, studies have examined the principalship position from various theoretical perspectives and by employing different methodologies. Those studies which deal with socialization will now be reviewed. Wiggins (1969-70) investigated the relationship between principal behavior and school climate and found no significant relationship. Principals shared identical behavioral characteristics regardless of the varied school climates. He posed the possibility that principals are more generally socialized within school districts than within schools. Moser (1955) reported that principals in performing their obligations enacted a bureaucratic role which accommodated to rules and regulations, performed predetermined tasks on a daily basis, assumed an impersonal orientation in their contact with clients and participated in those behaviors which were required by the role prescription. Bridges (1965) discovered that the more experienced principal accorded primacy to the organizational role. McCabe's (1972) study indicated that the organization may develop and maintain sets of role expectations for principals which teachers may learn over time. As teachers develop an understanding of the principalship role, the principal may be seen increasingly more favorably (53). Blood (1966) records anticipatory socialization as being the transition from the teaching position into the administrative position and suggest that attitudes, behaviors, and value systems are systematically altered. Mascaro's (1973) investigation of first year principals reports that "instructional leader behavior" is modified to accommodate other demands placed upon the role. Wolcott (1973) discovered that principals "insulated between the educators "above" them in the central office and educators "below" them in the classrooms acted as the formal bearers of organizational societal tradition" (321).

The studies reviewed above reflect a consistency by which principals assume a bureaucratic role. Time and work demands act as the prime influences

upon the formation of the administrative role.

As previously stated, socialization within administrative roles has not been extensively investigated. Research dealing the principalship examines socialization in light of the changes undergone by individuals as they perform their administrative role. Studies dealing with the superintendency deal with mobility, career patterns and role expectations.

Research dealing with the central office administrators has focused on their influence in policy formulation. The Gittel (1966), Gittell & Hallander (1968), and Rogers (1968) inquiries discovered the ever present force lodged within the structures and processes of large city central office staff. However, the studies cited above have concentrated on the formal aspects such as decision-making and policy formulation functions of the central office, rather than on the careers or socialization of those persons occupying the central office positions.

An exception to the above citations is McGivney & Haught's (1972) ethnographic report of the central office staff. They concluded that the primary perspective of the central office staff (COS) was its need to perceive itself as in "control of the situation" (22). They controlled racial disturbances; recruitment, selection and discipline of personnel; allocation of financial, material and human resources; the preparation, transmittal, and withholding of information to the superintendent, the board, city hall, press, community, principals, teachers, and non-professional staff; planning and programming the use of instructional hardware and software; and surveillance of potentially troublesome student and other groups.

The COS's viewed themselves as professionals. Since they operated in a "gold fish bowl" due to the school districts' public and open institution characteristics, expertise was claimed in curricular, pedagogical, financial

personnel areas. Rules and norms were then created by which parameters around the appropriate behavior for the professionals were placed. This led to severe sanctions of those professionals who criticized other professionals and board members in public (23). They also viewed most outside groups demanding changes as trouble makers. In order to reconcile these difficulties, efforts to establish and maintain central control over communications to significant agencies was an important activity. Other specific means were also employed to control situations. McGivney and Haught (1972) refer to them as "stacking the deck" and "lining up your ducks." Stacking the deck was illustrated by the recruitment of personnel process and the posting of vacancies for positions within the central office. The intent was to exert control over the type of person who was employed by the school system. The process included the composition of the interviewing committee and the creation of the "acting" position (23).

The central office consisted of two major subgroups and a number of minor subgroups. The first major subgroup possessed three characteristics: 1) the members interacted on a daily basis and in weekly administrative staff meetings led by the superintendent; 2) the position holders had considerably less tenure in the district than did members of the second major subgroup; and 3) its significant other was the board of education. This major subgroup contained two gatekeepers or leaders who attempted to control the information flowing to the superintendent and the board. Their major responsibilities were finance and personnel. The members within each of the minor subgroups interacted frequently on both functional and social bases facilitated by the proximity of their offices.

The second major subgroup had three important characteristics: 1) the members interacted on a daily basis both functionally and socially, and

officially interacted at a monthly supervisory council meeting; 2) the position holders held considerably more tenure in the district than did members of the first major subgroup; and 3) its significant others were building principals and teachers rather than the board of education.

Within the second major subgroup were three minor subgroups which again due to their proximity of offices, interaction around both functional and social interests was facilitated among the members. Friendship patterns such as lunch-going and extra-school events reinforced the formal interaction patterns within each of three minor groups. Furthermore, all three minor groups had members who were older in age and tenure in the district.

The subgroups just described were a central part of the policy development, implementation, and delay since they served as the means by which proposals were developed, presented and accepted. Acceptance of a proposal by minor subgroup members led to acceptance by major subgroups members, finally resulting in acceptance and approval by the superintendent and board of education. Subsequently, since the COS controlled a disproportionate share of the factors which influence policy outcomes (expertise, information, generation, and control); its significant others, the school board and the superintendent, usually deferred to the COS proposals.

In order to control the initiation and content of exogenous demands, the COS intercepted such proposals before they were submitted to the board of education as they attempted to impugn the credibility of outside groups by questioning their sincerity and the information base undergirding their proposals.

The appearance of controlling the situation was through the appearance of unanimity before the board and the "public" that even those issues initiated in arenas exogeneous to the school system and in conflict with extant subgroup

norms and perspectives were not acted upon by the board or superintendent. Rather, they were referred to the COS for comments and recommendations where they were submitted to the process of testing and gaining support within the COS.

The impact of the forces just described upon the individuals can be best illustrated through one of the statements regarding the readjustment to the on-going perspectives of the COS of those individuals returning with new knowledge or training. Two basic patterns of adjustment within the COS appear. One pattern is to belong to the major subgroup which controls finances and personnel and has the school board as the significant other. The second pattern is to be a member of the second major subgroup upon which the remaining school districts' responsibilities rest. The significant others are principals and teachers. One might speculate from the information presented that holders of positions within the first group are line careerists with the potential of attaining the superintendency. The short tenure in that position attests to greater mobility. Holders of positions within the second group may be staff careerists responsible for instruction and support services. Because the attainment of the COS positions does not normally come early in one's career one can also assume that these careers most closely approximate the mid-career socialization models.

Mid-Career Socialization of School Administrators

Assuming that the socialization process is the adaptation to the work settings individuals encounter, the study of career patterns among school administrators provides a means by which to understand the process. The career patterns so far discussed have included teaching and administration. The administrative careers covered have been the principalship and superintendency. Knowledge about socialization within the central office positions

is limited to a report describing the structures and processes of the central office staff subgroups.

Griffiths (1965) reports movement from teaching into administrative positions. Studies reporting similar movement between other school positions have not been located. Therefore, research has tended to be confined to three school positions: 1) teachers, 2) principals, and 3) superintendents. The socialization context has been generally limited to the classroom and school site. This preoccupation with the classroom and school site has ignored other contexts in which to acquire knowledge about the "work world" of school administrators.

This lack of information about the socialization of administrators is due to three factors: 1) the recency of the expansion of school administration; 2) the rapidity by which school administration has expanded; and 3) the variation of positions in administration which has provided both horizontal and vertical movement. The central office administration began its expansion during the early 50's. The factors which contributed to the rapid growth of the central office were: 1) the rapid growth of school age population and subsequent school building expansion in the 50's and 2) federal aid to education in the 60's. The ensuing expansion led to the necessity for specialists not only in curricular and managerial areas but support services as well. This need created a variety of position which has contributed to both horizontal and vertical movement possibilities for school administrators. The factors listed above have also contributed to neglect in researching central office career patterns. Consequently, important to the present discussion, mid-career socialization has also been ignored in educational research. This is not to say that mid-career socialization is limited to the investigation of the administrative position in the central office. But it is to point out that due to the length of time and experience requisite for the attainment

of these positions, it can be posited that central office positions most closely reflect mid-careers in school administration.

Mid-career socialization, then, may consist of: 1) socialization directed at vertical movement with the attainment of the superintendency as the ultimate goal; 2) socialization directed at horizontal movement which may consist of movement from principalship to principalship within and among school districts or movement among staff positions within and among school district central offices; and 3) socialization directed at remaining within a given position such as the high school principalship in a given school. The three types of socialization have distinct consequences. The latter two patterns may not be unlike the teaching career patterns Becker (1951-52) describes.

Vertical movement has been reported in the 1960, Profile of the School Superintendent to consist of teacher/principal/central office administrator/ superintendent in communities of 100,000 or greater population. In smaller communities, the vertical movement consists of teacher/principal/ superintendent. Ortiz and Criswell (1975) report some significance to the vice principalship position with increasingly significance in larger school districts. The same study indicates that the length of time spent in the various positions and a subtle preference over certain positions are of importance. For example, holding the teacher and vice principalship positions for a short length of time and holding the secondary school principalship position as contrasted to holding the elementary school principalship position increases the likelihood of attaining the superintendency. One might speculate that holding positions in the central office too long may also halt movement into the superintendency. For example, McGivney and Haught (1972) cite that members of the first major subgroup have less tenure than members of the second major subgroup of the

central office staff. One might hypothesize that aspiring superintendents may be located within the first major subgroup.

The decision to move usually begins during the period following the granting of tenure to a beginning teacher. The movement may continue upwardly until the superintendency position is attained or may be halted at any position in between. An examination of the length of time and experience required underscores the demands of the aspired position. The process indicates progressive movement from the classroom to the school site and from the school site to the central office. This gradual systematic process emphasizes the impact of the forces which the aspirant encounters. The identity and role formation begins with responsibilities directed at children, progressing to responsibility for teachers and other adults. Finally, the loyalty to the institution is reflected by the internalization of the organizational norms at the central office. Upon achieving the superintendency position, the person has not only become intimately involved with the educational processes throughout the system, but has also acquired support and credibility among his subordinates and colleagues. This exact, prolonged preparation must by its very nature instill certain rigidities, routines, and conservatism which would be reflected in administrative decisions. Nevertheless, the successful performance of each role and assumption of new roles, attests to a certain degree of flexibility and adaptability. In fact, it may be the short tenure in each position which serves to protect the flexibility so necessary for survival in the climb to the top administrative positions.

Research dealing with the principalship position indicates that rigidified behavioral patterns are developed among those who remain within the position for a great length of time. Subsequent movement is therefore halted. Therefore, principals tend to remain as principals within the same school; or they may elect to move from school to school within elementary or secondary schools,

or they may transfer from elementary to secondary schools. The critical point is they remain within the principalship position throughout the rest of their careers. For those principals who are upwardly mobile, the central office becomes the target. Within the central office, the office holders may elect to remain within one position, move among school districts or move up into associate superintendency positions. Most participants are unlikely to become superintendents.

The careers within the central office are conditioned by a variety of factors. McGivney & Haught (1972) list a number of them which determine successful central office staff performance. They are: 1) the public nature of the school system; the loyalty and unanimity that must be exhibited by the school officials in conducting their business; 3) the expertise and professsionalism which must be claimed and protected; 4) the interpersonal relationships which must be developed and nurtured by the structure of central office staff subgroups; 5) the management of information and 6) the control of school affairs. The factors demand time and experience in a variety of activities which familiarize the candidate with the institutions' problems and responsibilities. The skills for complying with the accompanying demands are not expeditiously mastered; nor are the positions in the central office gratuitously granted.

Thus, mid-careerists may be located within each of the administrative levels with three basic adaptations. The first form of adaptation is upward mobility with the superintendency in mind. The second form of adaptation is partial upward mobility with any one position along the way becoming permanent. Finally, the third form of adaptation is retention of the initially occupied position permanently. The first form of adaptation insures a degree of flexibility among the individuals as long as there is upward movement. The second form of adaptation ultimately provides an identity to the candidate during the mid-career stage. The principalship position becomes bureaucratized within the school site and the central office positions achieve harmony within

the school district site. The third form of adaptation provides stability for the candidate unencumbered by continuous readjustments.

Conclusions

In conclusion, an investigation of career patterns has provided a means by which to understand mid-career socialization of school administrators. Several career patterns have been shown to determine the form by which school administrators adapt. Those who remain in the principalship position obtain a bureaucratic stance towards their working environment and adapt to the working demands by altering their instructional leadership perspectives to embrace the necessary administrative and managerial behaviors. Those who move beyond the principalship to central office positions assume postures which will insure the retention of those positions permanently with responsibilities adjusted to guarantee that the school district remains in control and that the public image which they reflect will enhance their professionalism and unanimity. Those rare individuals who will finally attain the superintendency comply to the above expectations along with GASing to assure further movement.

Therefore, administrators' perspectives and behaviors are systematically altered and fixed by the nature of the vulnerability of the school organization, by the nature of the service functions which the schools perform, and by the nature of the career options available for individuals within school administration.

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